

PEMBROKE MAGAZINE

HWANG TONG-GYU: KOREAN POETRY

James Simmons
An Anthology of Irish Poetry

Aden Ross
Drama

FICTION by Larry Rudner, Paul Ruffin

POEMS by Robert Wallace, Ronald H. Bayes,
Stephen Knauth, Richard Jackson, Tom
Hawkins, Mary Snotherly, Ree Young, Cathy
Smith-Bowers, Judy Goldman, Bruce Piephoff,
Charles Edward Eaton, J.B. Goodenough,
Richard Jones, S.P. Miles, J.W. Rivers

DUNCAN FERGUSON

ESSAYS by Alan Wald, Robert W. Reising,
Grace DiSanto, David Chorlton, Sanford J.
Smoller

N.C. WRITERS PRAISE RONALD H. BAYES



Photo by LaVerne Harrell Clark

RONALD H. BAYES

Guises: A Chainsong To The Muse

for Joshu

I.

I am here
the fourth time,
16 years to the day since the last
I discover my calendar (not plan)
in my room in the Esja Hotel, Reykjavik,
not even built then!
27 years since the first: & in the 26th
year thereof, the first time in your arms
through that dearest one of three
even then your surrogates.

We are each always in a differnt guise,
but in this guise I've not by odds
as long to live again, by half, where
you we know eternal.

You lower your eyes.
Beautiful!

The drumbeat of the rain.
The mountain across and
the bay half hidden.

*Joash was seven years old
when he began to reign, and
he reigned forty years in
Jerusalem. His mother's name also
was Zibiah of Beersheba.*

*And Joash did that which was
right in the sight of the Lord all
the days of Jehoiada the priest.*

*And Jehoiada took for him
two wives; and he begat sons and
daughters.*

*And it came to pass that after this
Joash was minded to repair
the house of the Lord.*

All time is in time.
All time is out of time.

The bay half hidden.
Beautiful!

II.

The child is going
back to the flag poles.
He has proudly raised
the flags at daybreak
as he proudly lowered them
in the wind and rain
last evening.

He now goes with
a dustpan and small broom
to make the grooming
as fine as it can be for
the day. His clipped
hair over his brow
brown, blown in the wind.

His hair is gray.

III.

*...We bring our years to an end,
as it were, a tale that is told.*

The cross
& the harp
& the many
who weep
honor you.

*Comfort us now
after the time that thou has
plagued us*

for we are yet outlaws.

IV.

He holds the delicate
well-muscled body,
the cross made
by the sword at rest now
in the dragon's neck.

*We brought nothing
into this world.*

V.

& even we renegades
can see their hollow eyes, their
frightened children:
the workers out of work
who would work.

*Comfort us again now
after the time that thou
hast plagued us*

VI.

My darling's
skeleton.

VII.

The dawn is fierce.
The dawn is a brute.

VIII.

See the calm headsman?
See his job done?
See the axe-finished corpse?
There, at the base of the cliff.

IX.

Yet as from a gambler's dicethrow-fate
on the other side of the rise,
far side of desperation,
one lies on his back
face up to the cow's teats &
she nourishes him, benignly,
and he will rise and see

to her food and shelter
after all.

*I should utterly have fainted.
but that I believe verily to see
the goodness of the Lord in
the land of the living.*

Still....

X.

The deaths of
all
we love!

The young and the great and
predictable
coequal death-hurt,
our contemporaries.

XI.

We pray
& weeping
hide
our eyes.

XII.

Building, building
against all odds.

XIII.

Perhaps
a king out of Egypt?
or Iceland?

XIV.

The mother's vision!

XV.

The pain of the mother.

XVI.

Dependency,
labor
& prayer
& labor.
I do not understand
& am
even too weary
to curse.

XVII.

See?
The strong old one restrains
the young man
& whispers in his ear,
each on the back
of the same
dying horse.

EPILOGUE:

*Thou foolish one,
that which thou sowest
is not quickened,
except it die;
and that which thou sowest,
thou sowest
not that body that shall be,
but bare grain...
but God giveth it a body
as it hath pleased him,
and to every seed
its own body.
All flesh
is not the same flesh.*

You!
Rising from this meditation,
come
in your birthday suit
(with a top hat),
& tangle limb
cavort on the lawn
between the
stable
butts of
wine.

It will not darken utterly
for some time.

MARTIN ROBBINS

A Poet Who Voyages & Accomplishes: Ron Bayes' *A Beast In View*

Ronald H. Bayes, *A Beast in View: Selected Shorter Poems, 1970-1980*. St. Andrews Press, 1985. 61 pp. \$7.00

Travelers often start a casual conversation and get a life story. Although this book may at times have a casual tone, Ron Bayes' *A Beast in View: Selected Shorter Poems, 1970-1980*, takes us a lot deeper than conversation. As he writes in the book's first poem: "If you were here you might know/some of my heart's/confusion--and fusion."

But Bayes doesn't give us the "endless visions and revisions" of a Prufrock. These poems involve us in the searchings of a mature man, one

With the absolute same passions,
the desires somewhat clearer,
& the great hopes still, and still
not as a foolish man.

Bayes does his searching as he makes his way through “the Places I love now.” He takes us to Iceland and Canada, the Caribbean, and, in the last section’s evocative poems, to Japan.

Bayes sees himself as “The outsider who accomplishes,/who voyages, and I do not mean mere travel.” What he gives us here beneath the surface detail is more than “mere travel” because he’s searching for the meaning of the experience and through that understanding self-knowledge. Like the Zen saying that in the search for understanding at first mountains are merely mountains, then they no longer seem like mountains, and then finally they are mountains again, Bayes writes:

I have gone out only to come into
greater harmony than I had dreamed,
regardless of new confusions of the heart.

No instant enlightenment, but the search for harmony is clear. His heart may have new confusions, but as Bayes writes of Iceland later in the first poem, “There is an island in the lake; lake a/clear mirror. Mirror./The quiet is total. And this,/this is the heart.

Bayes’ work always teaches us to look further inside. He takes us with him in more ways than with the meditative, thoughtful tone. Like Wallace Stevens, he has his hi-jinks style. But Bayes uses the stylistic shifts—and his asides to writers ranging from Chaucer to Dorothy Parker—to point us inward. He talks of being so happy to be near someone that he’d do handstands, but he’d ‘hate to/....couldn’t cope with/a broken arm/if the handstand botched.”

Bayes knows, as he says in the witty poem, “I Know You’re Fun, Dorothy,/But I Still Brood Now and Then,” that it isn’t easy to “Wrest *something*/out of mundanity/red, howling, new!” Underneath, Bayes is serious. As he writes in the moving poem, “So What Else is New?”:

And so you woke and wondered
and were afraid last night alone
pitched into considerations of *who* and *if*
and if there is a home
any are quiet in.

From here the poem takes us further towards understanding Bayes’ attitudes. He explains his stance, how and why he uses everyday materials and language. After the matter-of-fact information that “there has been no rain in Tokyo for 57 days,” he tells us that the city “is like a tinder box.” But the poem doesn’t end there. “You fool

romantics dwell/on painful, passionate ends," Bayes ends the poem.

For him there is a sin in sincere if that means old poses, familiar words and accustomed tears. It's better to "part with hot coffee, and without grief,

planning, instead of tears,
outrageous attacks on future years
to keep our hearts as dry as wit
whatever our eyes think of it.

This stance, terse, epigrammatic and witty, may remind us of another traveller, one who wrote that "I laugh that I may not weep." But the Twentieth Century experience has changed the Byronic stance. In Bayes' work we detect an influence of Pound, irreverent and iconoclastic. In "Walking on Eggs" (Rangoon) Bayes concludes: "Alas, alas, mon/cher crysanthemum,/the world she screw." But through his accurate reporting this traveller experiences, not merely visits. Bayes gathers up bits of his heart—we overhear his search for wisdom. He puts the question this way in "Not as a Foolish Man":

Why,
Why cling to the geography of love?
I do not know, Dear Friends--
or why I'll hang before I quit.

Nobody goes for pain or wants to
in his right mind
dish out hurt. (Forgive my tonal change.
Bear with me.)

That vista, though! Come with me
to try and try, wet feet, rain
coming parallel—not freezing yet
our luck—stepping our mud.

Far from a romantic or idealized view Bayes gives us a look from the middle distance. He shows us a clear reflection of realities, warm and cold, in the Caribbean. His "Monday in Port Au Prince" is a kind of book of hours, innocent on the surface with chickens/dogs/chanting in from hills" at 4 a.m. There's happy chicks and Redlips Marie but also "laughter stop./quiet, fear./A Ton-ton is here" at 2 p.m. In a key passage he writes that when an outsider does more than "merely travel" he "is not immune to politics' brutality: That's fantasy."

What Bayes reports in the book's third and final section—from Japan—is a different reality. It is years later and the poet knows something different and deeper about his voyages:

Having won all races, the race
is elemental joy,
not contortion; straight
incision for healthy recovery by
intelligent doctors. "No twisty thoughts."
Clean knife.

Like the Zen saying "no second thoughts," this attitude helps Bayes to "neither dither nor wobble." Although we do get the sad and prescient hints of Yukio Mishima's *hari kiri* in the errie poem "That Day in the Shadow of Apollo," the main thrust of Bayes' work directs us towards a "healthy recovery." Ron is not claiming enlightenment in the long sequence which ends this fine book, "August Pillow: a Tokyo Notebook."

In the middle of the five o'clock rush hour, he's feeling "happily fuddled and lost...unscheduled." Like the rest of us, his impulse is to call somebody, make some plans. But "A Kid--probably 18--is on an outside phone calling his girl....I take out my pad. What a metaphor:

*Love
should still
be hanging
on the
phone*

I scratch it on the five-by-three paper. And I have to laugh. I'm trying to be Shelley and it comes out Thurber."

O.K., but we're with you "all together--forward & back & do-see-do," laughing at the wrong time, thrown clear off the high horse of elevated diction. And before that Japanese sunset fades, we get an illumination. "As Mr. Chaucer said,/'Yis'." and to answer Ron Bayes' question in this poem, "*Is anyone/ever exactly/at the other end/of the/line?*" yes, thank you, it's us, reading, listening in and understanding.

REX McGUINN

Ronald H. Bayes: Joyful Maker Of Umapine

With *Fram* Ronald Bayes culminates the *Umapine Tetralogy*, a catalogue of despairs redeemed through the wit and play of a poet in love with the English language. *History of the Turtle* (Olivant Press, 1970) initiates the tetralogy, *Porpoise* (Red Clay Books, 1973) follows as the second volume, and *Tokyo Annex* (St. Andrews Press, 1977), the third, creates the bridge to *Fram* (Pynyon Press, 1979). Each of these four books is further divided into four sub-sections, and each sub-section consists of a series of poems interwoven with recurring themes, personages, and images.

Emerging from the tetralogy is a chronicle of personal struggle, not painfully confessional as is so much bad poetry today, but personal struggle molded into art through classical restraint. But if these poems chronicle personal struggle, they nevertheless define that struggle in a comprehensive way. There is a struggle to formulate and express a sane approach to international relations:

Conscience
w/Science
our hope
& the world's:
W/Cathol I City

A struggle to create a religious consciousness that can affirm:

Just so--Mystery--
do I have complete
confidence
in You.

A struggle to come to terms with aging:

That odd
article in that month's
Esquire "on turning 40."
Mailing it with that incoherent note
to S. from Charlotte.

A struggle to express the value of persons and places:

Riddled,
We are all changed
& our loves changed too,
but we are not.

Kilter,
coulter,
plough & furrow.
I riddle you so.

Through each of these struggles the tetralogy confronts confusion: the disasters of Cambodia and Ireland, of Korea and the Middle East, of many people's personal relations equally disastrous. But at the same time Bayes records moments of coherence: "Awakening to the rain again, / to the green garden." In the balance between these worlds of defeat and victory, the tetralogy progresses through a series of tensions that enhance the interest of the individual poems.

Bayes creates in the Umapine poems a world in which poetry matters. He is a poet's poet, and at one time or another many of the major contemporary poets enter the tetralogy. One poem unfolds as a letter to Robert Duncan, and in another Duncan, Olson, Creeley, Ginsberg, and Whalen define themselves through non-

verbal gestures. In *Tokyo Annex* Pound, Williams, and Lowell appear, and throughout the tetralogy Bayes recalls episodes and conversations, many from first-hand experience, that make these poems valuable to us for the glimpses we receive of the lives of our poets.

Nevertheless, despite the despair that twists these poems, despite the disasters, despite the observations of the chronicler, despite the visions of clarity won from all of these, Bayes enconces all within his sense of play. From *Porpoise*:

& sd Hutch to the question: "Wut's a graduate school student?"

"He's a guy who doesn't know when the party's over."

From *Fram*:

O MY PANTHER

O MY YIPPLE YIO KAY*A, HEEEEEE

But Bayes believes play applies to all, not to the merely comic. Following a well-established English tradition, he manipulates language in a way that is simultaneously whimsical and serious. In *Fram* he puns and unpacks meanings:

((Reasoned

re-son'd

raise son

rear sons

Resurrection!

When the reader begins his attempt to come to terms with these poems, he must not miss these playful moments.

Regardless of Pound's *Cantos* and Williams' *Patersson*, with which this collection shares many qualities, *Umapine Tetralogy* creates a form of its own. It is a kind of anti-epic that manipulates purposeful fragmentation as a vehicle to call to mind possibilities of coherence and heroism and peace. The tetralogy is at the same time a series of epigrams and a collection of imagist poems turned to non-lyrical themes. Bayes sometimes borrows from the economy of Japanese forms, while at other times he remakes epistolary verse. In the end though, all unites in the poet's voice, and while Bayes can be sometimes sardonic and at other times sincere, his voice impresses with its authenticity and cumulative power. His rhetoric encompasses many divergent modes, from slang to drunken slurring to the elegiac to the biblical, and yet each mode contributes to a larger dominant voice, that of the injured seer reborn as joyful maker.

SHIRLEY MOODY

We Are All Heart
(for Ron Bayes)

1.

We are
hearts beating
in broken bodies

We are broken hearts
beating
in whole bodies

We are
hearts
with murmurs

2.

We are
beaten bodies
with hearts
or bodies
with beating hearts

We are
bleeding
and still
beating beating

3.

We are
hearts worn
on our sleeves

We are
all heart-worn
but heart
-y

4.

We wear
our hearts
and
our hearts
are wearing
out
but we are
never heart
-less

JANE PERRIN

March Fifth
For Ron Bayes

Dark dawn
drones on

bird song
stuck in its throat.

N.C. Writers Honor Ron Bayes

(The North Carolina Writers Conference held its annual gathering at the Mission Valley Inn at Raleigh on July 26, 1986, and the final banquet was dedicated to the memory of Manly Wade Wellman, a long-time member of the Conference who had died earlier in the year. Sam Ragan, a past chairman of the Conference, presided and gave the opening remarks).

RAGAN--For several years it has been the custom of the N.C. Writers Conference to honor one of its members at the final session of this annual gathering. That splendid custom has grown to be a tradition, and each of us looks forward to this event each year.

Tonight we honor Ronald H. Bayes, a longtime member and former chairman of the Conference. Ron, it is an honor to salute you.

Ron Bayes is writer-in-residence at St. Andrews Presbyterian College, a much-heralded teacher, the founder of the nationally celebrated St. Andrews Review, and the St. Andrews Press, whose impact on the literature of the state and nation is both tremendous and far-reaching.

A remarkable testimony to his abilities is the fact that the man he works for, the President of St. Andrews College, Dr. A.P. Perkinson, has interrupted his vacation to come here tonight and speak up for him.

Two other speakers on this banquet program are long-time friends and fellow laborers in the literary vineyards--your Conference president, Shirley Moody, and your past president the singing troubadour, Shelby Stephenson.

Whether we survive the evening is a question, but if we do it will be remembered.

You will hear from these three distinguished speakers a little later, but first let me tell you something about our honored member.

Ron Bayes came to North Carolina some 18 years ago, and he quickly got tar on his heels. The fact that he stayed, far from his home in Oregon, is our good fortune. He was born and brought up in Umapine, Oregon, and received an undergraduate and master's degree at Eastern Oregon University, where he later taught. He also has done graduate work at Colorado State, the University of Penn., the University of British Columbia, and Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

For three years he was a combat infantry man stationed in Iceland, and he has strong ties with several other countries--Japan, Greece, Italy, and everywhere except Lower Slobbovia.

He has close friends with writers and the literary community in all parts of this country, and the world.

Ron Bayes and I became friends soon after he came to North Carolina and we have tilted with many of the same windmills.

He made the St. Andrews Review a magazine of excellence, and it has indeed become a significant voice in the literature of the state and nation.

The St. Andrews Press fills a much needed place in publishing, and the college can be proud of the role it has played in the development of the literature of our region.

As a poet, Bayes early set his sights high, and I know of no other of his time who has aimed so high--to tell the story of the world and the human condition in poetry.

Next Monday in *The Pilot* there will appear an excellent column by Ted Malone, a tribute to Ronald H. Bayes. I am taking the liberty of quoting a few excerpts from that column.

Of Bayes poetry, Malone says: "It is like a fresh breeze lightening the mind, like a well prepared gourmet salad. Among the ingredients are a solid measure of realism, spoonfuls of romance and regret, a flavoring of the exotic, and a healthy dash of audacity."

He goes on to say: "Although he respects tradition, his writings reveal him as a man of the present, who is more likely to find poetic inspiration at an airport or night club than in some pastoral dell... Wry and raucous and tender, Ron Bayes is a talented man who has done a lot for North Carolina."

It is a splendid tribute.

Many of your friends, Ron, could not be here tonight but sent their greetings. Among them was Harriet Doar of Charlotte, who wrote to say:

"I cherish him: for his humor, his spontaneity and his depth of feeling (often disguised with laughter)... for his perception and generosity...for his original mind, unique turn of phrase and complex personality... for dredging channels to bring new writers to readers and new audiences to writers...for his darting sideways glance and the eye wrinkles that go back to his ears, presaging wit or sheer enjoyment...and mainly for being what he is: poet, friend, teacher, and a rare human being."

We are here tonight to hear other facets of the life of Ron Bayes, and to lead off the assault I will call upon a fine poet, teacher and old friend--Shirley Moody.

MOODY--I first met Ron Bayes seven years ago almost to the day, at the 1979 North Carolina Writers Conference. Earlier that same year, I had written to Sam Ragan to apply for a residency at Weymouth Center in Southern Pines. When I received word from Sam that I would be in residence at the same time as Ron, I wondered about this man whom I'd never met. Sam thought this would make a good arrangement, stating that Ron was a cordial individual and that perhaps it might be convenient on my first trip there to have another person along.

I recall asking a good friend and fine poet, Betty Adcock, if she knew Ron, telling her that I might be more comfortable indeed having another writer stay in that large mansion with me. Betty replied that she wasn't quite sure that Ron would necessarily be any braver than I, recalling a Writers' Conference in Boone, when she and Ron jumped onto a ski-lift together. She nervously whispered to Ron how frightened she was about riding so high above the ground. When Ron made no comment, Betty turned to find that he had not only been rendered speechless by their predicament, but had become virtually paralyzed with fear! Betty followed by assuring me that she knew that Ron would stay by my side and remain a loyal friend--adding that I would also learn much about Japanese culture!

Late one February night, during our most recent residency together at Weymouth this year, Ron and I were in deep discussion--perhaps about Andre Malraux's desire to give men a consciousness of their own hidden greatness, or perhaps the state of affairs in North Carolina politics, or (most probably) whether or not to have cooked oriental noodles for breakfast the following morning. But it was that night when I became thoroughly convinced that Ron indeed made a heroic warrior. During our conversation, we had heard suspicious noises in the upstairs plantation quarters. So armed with only an empty wine jug and all of a two-ounce gavel belonging to a local women's club, we stalked off into the jungles of the James Boyd Estate as bravely as any two defenders marching into battle, looking no less I'm sure than like Laurel & Hardy. But be they human intruders or stirring rats, we must have successfully frightened them away, didn't we, Ron!

I am a believer that our clearest moments of understanding--both in life and in poetry--are not *taught* to us at all, but are *caught*. I've been fortunate to have spent time in Ron Bayes' company, and I have been changed by his infectious nature. It is an honor to be given this formal occasion in which to express his specialness--the impact, and the impression he has made on me and so many others.

I called on several such people to share with me their feelings and stories having to do with Ron so that I might pass them on to this assembly:

From Grace Gibson--"Ron is dear to my heart in so many ways, but the story I love best is how he learned from the *Tokyo Times* how to write a waka. He taught the form so successfully to so many writing classes, and I was so impressed with the tightness of the form that I began instructing my classes, too, in the demands of making a poem from 31 *letters* of the alphabet. Several years later Ron confessed that a friend from Japan had corrected his reading of the *Tokyo Times*: a waka requires 31 *syllables*!

"I still teach 31 letters and gleefully call it a ron-waka, or sometimes a waka-ron!"

From Sallie Nixon--"There is so much I could say, because Ron is for me and for many a very special poet--and for me, he is also a very special friend. The characteristic that comes through over and over in any writer's encounter with Ron is his tender response--the interest--never rejection, but an urging undertone that keeps one from completely slipping the writing harness. I am so very grateful for my association with him. I learned a great deal from him. One of his poems has been above my desk for years--what else could one say that would better exemplify devotion?"

From Mary Belle Campbell--"I fell in love with Ron Bayes at an Arts Council workshop in Fayetteville in 1976 when he pointed a long finger at me and my poem still floating on air and said, 'That poem can be published!' A neophyte in poetry, I recognized a poet who understood that 'a gift that cannot be given away ceases to be a gift,' that here was a teacher worth traveling to study with. The following February I drove the 40 miles at night to Laurinburg and in July joined his group of students to study at the Ezra Pound castle at Brunnenburg in the Tyrolean Alps.

"I observed that his teaching, his lecturing, flows as from a fountain, is, in a word, inspired, and I learned that he believes in the Muse theory of Creativity.

"Whereas Ron Bayes is terse and concise as a poet, as a professor, he is voluble as the tendril-climbing passionflower vine, not wordy but just plain brilliant, sparkling and easy to follow. He knows British and American literature and Latin literature. he understands the metaphors, the classical allusions, the psychological and mystical meanings.

"Ron, early in Oregon, discovered for himself the psychological wisdom to believe in the Gift given and to trust that which is given.

"His poetic Muse? An Icelandic maiden, perhaps? Or a geisha girl?--the likes of which he has found no parallel in all his questing in England, Ireland, Germany, or America.

"Ron's Muse pours forth volumes of images that filter through his head and heart; *then* she gives him a stern command, 'Frame it, *fram*-it, cut it to the bone!'"

From Jack Roper--"If Ron weren't here (St. Andrews College) I doubt that I would be, because his inspiration and example keep me going when my own energies and aspirations flag--which is more often than I care to admit. He *is* the arts here in our region of North Carolina and of course he inspires people many other places as well. While he knows little about history and his politics are abysmal, he has kept me

going in both fields with his special encouragement and advice. There are a thousand stories, of course, but most are Sufi tales which require the consumption of large amounts of liquor and a patience to listen for at least two hours.

"I'm so glad he's being honored; when Sam called on the phone to let me know, I felt happier than when I got my first contract for a book!"

From Joel Oppenheimer--"Ron Bayes lives on Homer Street, but he tells me Laurinburg folklore has it that the street was named not for the father of us all, but because a local slugger deposited a monstrous homerun there one day years ago. As with most of Ron's stories, one doesn't know if this is true or not, but one wants to believe it!

"I know of few in any field who have been as generous with time, energy, friendship, help as Ron Bayes has been to his fellow poets. Whether as reader, critic, editor, publisher, teacher, he does it all well, which is to say, with care. He's also served as communications center for a poetry network spread across the world, bringing good poets to the attention of North Carolina, and North Carolina to the attention of good poets.

"Since we're both romantic poets of a certain age the anecdotes we share are far too lewd for such an august celebration as this. Suffice it to say that we've nursed each other through many a broken heart, and even some more mundane moments when one of us felt our age creeping up!

"Good friend, good poet, good man, I lift a distant glass to you!"

From Ron's Former Student, Bobby G. Price--"When I entered St. Andrews in the Fall of 1979, I planned to study pre-med, but I'd also been writing. I had some work I wanted someone's opinion on and had heard good things about Ron from fellow students.

"I went down to his office and told him a little about myself and how I would appreciate it if he could find the time to look over my things. He said I should come back in a week or two and check the chair outside his office where he stacked the graded material.

"I came back and found my things in the chair, with comments. When that little thing happened, I'd never heard of William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, ee cummings was just a name. To meet a 'real poet' and to have him like what I did meant more than I can ever say.

"Before then, I didn't know if I had any talent or not. Yet today, because of Ron's positive comments and carefully tempered suggestions, I have a double major in English and Philosophy instead of medicine, and am waiting for my second book to come back from the bindery.

"Though I have great respect for Ron's intellect, his talent, his insight, I would have to say I respect him the most for his kindness and genuine caring.

There are thousands, maybe millions of people with intellect, talent and insight, but I have run into at least that many who are such petty people, who scorn younger writers or who try to make the younger writer a carbon copy of themselves. I've never known Ron to try that, and when you match his ability with his caring and his concern, you not only get a special person but special poems because ability alone can make some boring poems; when you add that kindness and concern, you get a texture. That's what it's all about."

From Julie Suk--"Dear Father of Thorstein (Ron's cat).

"The long overdue accolades you will receive tonight are only the tip of deep affection we, who like to call ourselves 'friend', feel for you. There can never be thanks

enough for nurturing our poems, stories, manuscripts, aspirations, and last, but not least, our difficult humors.

"May the gods, wherever they are, bless and keep you--and Thorstein too!"

"*From William Stafford*--"From far off Oregon, where Ron Bayes flourished before he deserted us for North Carolina, I loft this greeting, which I hope you will relay to him when the writers gather on July 26.

"Please tell him we who were left behind still cherish our memory of his time here, and that we send along our very best, our continuing regard, and our hopes that he will visit us from time to time on his journeys for literature."

As for me, Ron was the first person, other than my teacher and friend, Tom Walters, to invite me to a college campus to give a reading. This man actually risked taking me and my poetry seriously! I have tried to be worthy of those risks.

Knowing and listening to him has personally aided me in becoming a better receiver of all life's experiences--the tragedies, the joys, the comradeships, the loneliness and the isolation. He has helped me to understand that what happens to us, simply *happens*--but our response and reaction to what happens to us is something we *can* determine. This revelation has helped me as poet, educator and human being; and I have long respected the opinions of someone whose primary concern is books, not bombs! And as much as anyone I know, Ron Bayes is Poet. During a time when there are sizable cutbacks in the arts, humanities and social welfare programs, yet increases are pumped into national defense, and while the Meese Commission succeeds in efforts to prevent retailers from selling what it considers pornography, I am quick to recognize what a rare and endangered species poets may become.

Last February, I recall watching Ron from my upstairs window at Weymouth's Writers' Quarters as he strolled through the gardens below. There he was sporting overcoat, scarf and grey wool beret, wearing dark leather gloves and working a cigar on a chilly overcast morning. I recall thinking about his energy, his storehouse of information, his travels, his memory, his humanity and humility, his mixed cultural experiences, his humor and wit, his talents, his inspiration, his heart, and the care with which he lived. I knew at that moment that for me, Ron embodied the ideals of this experiment we call America where society is based upon individual ability and merit. I recognized that the presence of such a superior mind and personality was an unusual and unique tonic.

Ron is someone I admire for his ability and his power to think, to perceive, and to generate excitement about life. And having spent time with Ron both alone and in the company of great numbers, I have been privileged to hear him read his poetry. I always imagine that as listeners, we are boarding the amusement park ride I enjoyed so much as a child. My own teenage girls tell me this ride is called The Gravatrone. But it is the ride in which people line the inner wall of a large cylinder. When the ride begins, the cylinder spins, then the floor falls away as if opened from below, and we are left hanging with our backs pressed powerfully against a wall! If you will for a moment, imagine yourself on this ride while opposite you in this spinning, floorless cylinder is Ron Bayes skillfully tossing sticks toward you. As physics would have it, if the cylinder moves us around in the same amount of time as the sticks he hurls across to us, Ron actually should be catching his own flung sticks again and again! But he is too clever, too wise not to know how to adjust for this shift. He is not tossing words like sticks at all, but like boomerangs landing precisely and expertly wherever he aims. The boomerangs come back, all right, but we, his audience, are moved into position to receive them. In reality, of course, these are the words Ron speaks to us in

his poetry. He is so clever with them, that what at first may appear or sound like a bizarre variation--is really a shift of *frame of reference*, just as the amusement park ride illustrates. The point being, his poetry creates a shift of our perceptions and our concepts--a shift in our ways of perceiving causes and effects, all charged with the same emotion and excitement and in the same guise as a joy ride.

Ron, each of us is here tonight to underscore your achievements in invigorating poetry and poets with your imagination and sharp insights. To me, your thoughts and poetry capture a disarming relevance to our anxious times, juxtapositioning the sacred and the profane. Your ear is attuned to what passes for our conversation and philosophy, our excuses and evasions, stops and starts. And by using these tones and rifts of modern life, you explore *us* in your work, always planing down to how we *feel*. You have used wit and comedy along with solemn absurdities to reflect the chaos, disparity and sometimes the inconsequence of modern life.

And mostly, you remind me of our desire to "put together for the very first time." You are definitely an evangelist, demonstrating that by a willingness to stand alone, we can carve a permanent niche in the contemporary literary consciousness. And since we Southerners are always looking for reinforcements, you have been graciously received by Southern writers.

I imagine that there are many spirits alive in this room tonight who have known one another for aeons, Ron, and there are times when we have read you and have known you that we recognize one another and say, "I think this way, too!"

So tonight, Ron, we lift our cups high in praise and in our hope to share with you--using some words from a line in one of your own poems--many, many more "lovely, and decadent hangovers."

RAGAN--The next speaker will be a splendid fellow poet and teacher, the editor of *Pembroke Magazine*, who could probably make a fortune picking his guitar and singing bawdy songs--Dr. Shelby Stephenson.

Stephenson--"RONALD H. BAYES--THE ARTIST IN THE MAN." I want to address the inevitable and necessary form in Ron Bayes' poetry. I want to suggest that the form is open and that that open form reveals the artistic temperament and aesthetic possibilities in Ron's poetry.

In his sensibility, he is contemporary, then, as opposed to modern, which is to say that he not only writes about himself in his work, he reminds his readers and the world that he is a person who is trying to live the life of the artist, trying to write the poem or trying--as publisher/editor--to publish someone else's work, trying--as teacher--to encourage and inspire. One self begets another. His creativeness allows the world to participate in his life.

Let me show you what I mean. This excerpt is from "Third Porpoise," from the book *Porpoise*. Ron begins the section with a quote from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*: "When a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so casual as it seems to be." He invites us to think, though he does not demand that we do.

"Somewhat on this wise, it was, that the Minority Leader returned to his television credits and to his public, through the hospital doors like a Ben Casey for openers. The fact revealed, dramatically ***EVERETT McKINELY DIRKSEN***

but

faster than grease the then Veep***HUMPHREY*** into the lens, preempting...sez, on camera...

he

(Hu-bert): Hoya doin buddy?

(Ev) 'Fine.' ((irefully regaining audience))

((looking right at***HUBERT***))

'you know the biblical story about the Philistines being slain with the jaw-bone of ***AN ASS***?' -a silence-

'Wehll, watch out, or we may see an ass slain with the jawbone of a crutch.'

Back in control! of scene, yatter for a few moments. Nice enough.

Then: ***EV***'Now,

chaps, the next televised round

I may

let you see the scar

of my operation.' (Vide LBJ)"

I'm suggesting that Ron Bayes' poetry works as a guard against inattention, since his lines people his pages with references to people and events his readers may or may not know. Often the poet's personal life is textured in the poems which become accurate poetic statements of the poet's life. (See Fred Chappell's "Murmuring Bits": Ron Bayes' 'Umapine Books,' *Pembroke Magazine*, 17 (1985), 7-13.) My point is that the reader goes along with the drama, recreating memory (if it is available) or folk-art or slapstick or whatever. Bayes' perception projects the reader to render anew what he puts on the page.

I do not want to suggest that Ron scatters this reportage on the page, no. It does not just lie there, unused and unheard. It--this investigative method, teeming with lyrical and political realities and resonant symbology--is the form. It is the motion his artistry takes. In other words, his presence of mind in the minutest detail puts him in the forefront of contemporary poets. Ron somehow rarely combines trivia with some of the most poignant and intense emotional lyricism being written today.

Listen to a lyric from "Fourth Porpoise, Sixth Book." The excerpt takes the form of a letter, a poem, relaxed and easy, completely different from the hee-haw travesty, folk-political tale applied to Senator Dirksen's television days.

"from home, Umapine, a letter:

Dear -

Hollyhocks are blooming in town now.

They are very pretty...

by the back porch some are higher than I am,

and are a very dark red.

There is a pink one

near the corner.

By way of excitement this morning I

washed the car--enjoyed it though--I also

cleaned our back porch.

I had a good lunch, or dinner,

after I cleaned up a bit. Chicken, roasting ears, salad,

cake and ice-cream and coffee.

The kids made a nice little call
as I was eating; said they were home
all
day
yesterday
--and this morning--working."

At this point another voice begins to end *Porpoise*, a voice of incremental memory and association, the basic Bayesian perception.

"Today has been nice; almost cool.
Now it is overcast:
(put the car in the garage) and..."

The artist working in Ron Bayes gathers and accumulates evidence from every imaginable source. The effect of this kind of poetry is continuous surprise and vision and variety.

At the base of Bayes' poetry is the lyric impulse which frames the larger implications which Bayes, the artist, fills in, always inviting the reader to join him in his desire to complete the whole picture.

I am not suggesting that Ron's work is an order of disorder. Often he shows an allegiance to traditional measures, a strong preference to meter and rhyme. An example is a poem called "Chapter," from *The Casketmaker*.

"At evening on your farm
did you ever put eggs in your pockets,
see if you could do what others had
screwed up at? You know, they busted them
once some kid, Dad said?

One time I got brave enough to, scared at that,
because my Aunt Exa was there;
and I found this nest by the ditch
and put two in each pocket and
ran like hell. They busted.

And boy it was gooey, and it was slick
and I felt sick
and I knew, boy I knew I'd goofed.
But nobody scolded--since Exa was there.

Who's sorry he tried running?"

Hear the internal rhymes, the storytelling, the conversational tone? All within the formal structure? And always the playing around with words, the punning? And the humor and the hurt? Something of the universal incompleteness?

But it is always the lyrical vision Ron Bayes goes for, breaking out in that transcendental awareness that characterizes his poetry, a transcendence into the

experiences of this world. These moments are joyful harmonies or sacred presences of pain and of transitory happiness. This awful and beautifully terrifying ambiguity holds Ron's poetry, sustains it through new perceptions and discoveries.

Vision marks much of the charm of his most recent book, *A Beast in View*. Here are some examples:

RETURNING IN JANUARY

"And two years gone
yet you remember me!

We both sense the love
who never 'met.'

Promises are made
before new leaving

And saying words
we will hold to is joy

These petals will not drop,
time or not."

Or listen to this, "Just a Lyric for Leo."

Sometimes I feel
like a mother-
less toe,

O sometimes I feel
like a motherless
toe,

Yeh, sometimes I feel
like a mother-
less toe,

O why the sock it
has to have
a public hole?"

Ron's life as poet, editor, publisher, dramatist, fiction writer leads us into his life, toward his poetry which is his life. As he lives and works, he appreciates all the tones and traditions:

HOMAGE TO ROD McEWEN, E.A. GUEST & MRS. BROWNING

"When I consider how my life
has been
before my brain has teamed up
with my pen
I rue the ruck and welter,
toil and strife,
and take Professor Gluck's
Beginning Creative Writing Course
once again."

And here is Ron's "4th PORPOISE: EIGHTH BOOK:

"Refugees!
The collapse
of the prepared face
when we recognize
one another.

Hooray!"

RAGAN—The clean-up hitter for this night of fun and games is an old friend who has brought a new image to the office of college presidents. I know of no one who is a greater supporter of literature, who has often been on the sidelines cheering Ron Bayes on or leading the parade in his behalf. It is a pleasure indeed to present to you, Dr. A.P. "Bun" Perkinson, President of St. Andrews Presbyterian College.

PERKINSON—Ron Bayes has obviously done a lot of good things in his life. You have heard about some of them. But, Ron, I want to say to you and to Bobby G. Price that your act of saving him from the medical profession and the medical profession from him may be your greatest accomplishment. What in the world would we do, Bobby G., with a literate physician. It's a little bit difficult to stand here and follow these two marvelous presentations, particularly since I have no idea whom they were talking about.

I thought I knew Ron Bayes. For example, he told me once that Homer Street was named because his middle name was Homer. He told me that whoever gave him that name gave him the middle name Homer to assure that he would be a writer. And I asked him, I wonder when it's gonna take effect. The man is absolutely overcome with emotion. Ron, it's the water. You never drink it; now don't start now.

I have learned a lot from Ron Bayes. For example, I learned that a Southern boy, even a Tennessee Southern boy, cannot hold a candle to Ron Bayes when it comes to keeping the company of Jack Daniels. I have written home to Lynchburg, Tennessee, which is not far from my home, and suggested that the new Bartles-and-Jaymes type ads might be Bayes and Perkinson. So long as they don't make us sit on an ice cube!

It is an honor for me to be here this evening and to come back from vacation to say a word about Ron Bayes. I am glad to get a chance to join in honoring Ron and to join the NC Writers Conference in celebrating Ron, not just the poet but Ron the

person. And while it's an honor to be a part of this occasion, it is also a bit of challenge as well, to talk to this group about Ron Bayes. As a group, of course, your skill with the language puts anyone appearing before you somewhat on edge, especially an ex-real estate man who is now a college president. And on top of all that, you folks know Ron. I can't get by with understatement or overstatement. I can't get away with anything before this group. So I am going to play this straight from the shoulder and in a sense straight from the heart as well.

Now each of you knows by reputation and many of you know firsthand the support and the enthusiasm which Ron has for his fellow poets and creative writers. Many of you—in fact, probably a majority of the folks in this room—have felt Ron's gentle encouragement. But many of you have come to our campus to read your poetry at Ron's invitation. And as Carolyn Kizer so tactfully, so delicately puts it, as only Carolyn can do tactfully and delicately, some of you have come for nothing and some of you have come for even worse, a mere pittance, as she puts it. She told me once she didn't mind doing something free; it gave her a sense of nobility. But when she came for the pittance that Ron and St. Andrews offered her, somehow it made her feel cheap. And I said, "Are you going to keep coming?" And she said, "Absolutely, I wouldn't miss it for anything." So I just want to take a few moments to talk with you about our mutual friend, our colleague, Ronald Homer Bayes. And what I would like to do is just reflect in at least some small portion, some small degree, the love and the esteem, the very deep commitment that all of us at St. Andrews have for Ron. I was tempted, I must say, to try to trade barbs with Ron, and I sort of eased over in that direction initially while I was up here. But, Ron, I didn't mean a word of it, I promise you. But we all know that Ron is not capable of being half-hearted. And as his poetry has many layers, so do his heart and his energy and his intellect and his compassion. There are many, many facets to this man, and I think most of us have seen most of them. And most of them really are quite pleasant, Ron. We are delighted you have these many facets. One of his colleagues said something the other day along this line, that Ron teaches a reverence for the muse with the irreverence of a TV evangelist. And I was glad that somebody referred to you as an evangelist a moment ago. We all know Ron the scholar who came to St. Andrews in 1968 with all these degrees and all this experience. We know that he is a person who has been invited to record his poetry at Harvard's Widener Library. We know that he lectures and speaks about his own work and about Pound and about Japanese writers literally all over the country. We know that he has published a dozen books of poetry and other kinds of writings. So we know about Bayes the scholar. And we know about Bayes the world traveler. I am still trying to find out why on a two-year enlistment he spent three years in Iceland, but there may be more to that story than any of us know or need to know for that matter. And there is, of course, Bayes the publisher, the editor, the promoter of the literary good works through the St. Andrews Review and there are many other avenues, vehicles, that he has had something with which to do in the beginning and in the continuum. But the thing that I want to emphasize about Ron Bayes is Ron Bayes the teacher. Because the influence that Ron has had on students, I think, has not been surpassed by anyone who ever has taught in the classroom at St. Andrews. Ron is a valued colleague of all of us, be we faculty members who teach or administrators. And his teaching, his passion for teaching goes far beyond just the classroom. He is the kind of teacher who invites a pizza delivery man to read at a writers forum on a Thursday evening. He is also the kind of teacher who simply

teaches janitors to read. His classes always are overflowing. We were chatting earlier in the bar--Ron was drinking water--about the fact that he had a problem this summer. He prepared for seven students in a class and there were twenty-two. And he couldn't decide whom to eliminate, so he just took them all, which is not unusual. Many times classes over-enroll, and he won't let the Registrar close off the classes. Somebody, some new poet might be in that group, and Ron might miss a discovery.

I remember an experience of three or four years ago that I want to relate to you just to illustrate Bayes the consummate teacher. There was a young man at St. Andrews by the name of Will Petersen. If any of you followed basketball much in the late seventies, you know that Will was a three-time All American Division III basketball player at St. Andrews. He was featured on one of the TV channels here in Raleigh. And in the course of that interview which lasted five or six minutes, he mentioned that he viewed basketball as an art form. Now here is a young man, who was raised in a ghetto in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. His mother had eleven children including Will. She was a seamstress, worked in the shadow of the luxury hotels that her family couldn't even afford to walk though, much less go to an event there. And this young man had dropped out of school in the ninth grade and somehow somebody had found him and sent him to Laurinburg Institute and somehow we had found him. Actually the basketball coach found him. And our basketball coach did not see basketball as an art form nearly to the degree that Will Petersen saw it as an art form. But here is this young man with a background that did not prepare anyone for seeing him as a person interested in creative writing or able to do it, a man who needed special attention, a young man who was older than some of our seniors when he was a freshman. And yet this young man is telling a TV interviewer that he viewed basketball as an art form. So the fellow with an astounded look on his face, said, "How so?" The sportswriters can't figure out anything sometimes and need a little help. Will said, "Well, it's like writing poetry, one thing sort of follows another and you get into the flow..." The microphone was sort of dropping and he said, "Do you write poetry?" And Will said, "Yes, I do." And he said, "Who reads it?" "Well, my teacher reads it." Well, how did you get..." This interview continued and this young man spent quite a bit of time educating the sports reporter about what it means to be a student as well as an athlete and how he got started writing poetry. And about a week or so later, I was in my office and Will came by and said he wanted to see me. And I said, fine. He said, I am going to be graduating soon and for four years we have never really talked about much but basketball and things like that, and I just wanted to talk to you as a person. He wanted to tell me about a course he had had with W.D. White on Milton and what a discovery the experience had been and how he didn't understand Milton until he found out that Milton was blind. And he wanted to tell me about writing poetry for Ron Bayes and about his discussion with the fellow at the TV station. So I asked him some of the same dumb questions that the sportswriter had asked. How did you get started writing poetry? And why did you do it? He said I wrote poetry because Mr. Bayes told me I could and that I had to. And I said why did you keep writing? And he said because Mr. Bayes told me it was good. And before that year was out that young man, thanks to Ron, had compiled a book of his own poetry to take home with him to share with his mother and his friends. I saw Will about a year and a half ago and I asked him if he was playing basketball. And he said yeah, I am playing for an army team in Germany. And he said and I am also writing poetry. That, my friends, is the kind of tribute to the consummate teacher that we revere at St. Andrews. Ron Bayes. We love you.

RAGAN--Ron, we have saved the last for you to offer a rebuttal. The stage is now yours.

BAYES--My Calvinist upbringing has not prepared me for the good things of the last six months, of which this is the apex. I get the feeling that I am seeing myself sitting under a tree in an exotic place, weary after shaking the tree for years and years--not unlike the protagonist in W.B. Yeats's "At The Hawk's Well" in a sense. I see myself dozing under that exotic tree. And a god's plenty of exotic and marvelous fruit tumbles all about me...none of it konking me on the head. It is beautiful and tasty, but after ascertaining this, I freeze at the elbows. It is a big and dense tree and it makes me wonder if a gorilla or two won't be tumbling down next. But, as I said, that's John Calvin for ya.

But to carry the metaphor just a little bit further, it has been wonderful to spend nearly two decades in the literary vineyards of North Carolina and I was welcomed here by Sam Ragan immediately upon my arrival and he opened doors with remarkable generosity and I went through them and have met and welded to my memory so many superb friends as a result that it gives me a remarkable and joyous pause. I dare not attempt to call the roll. I would fall short and perform unmeaningful injustices. Only Sam and Marjorie dare such cheeky things with their annual and delightfully staggering Christmas poem published in *The Pilot*.

We tell tales at these conferences and elsewhere. Writers like--above all else--to gossip when they are allegedly in conference. Natural. How long can you stagger about under the burden of high seriousness and pedagogical pursuit?

When Marvin and Jackie Saltzman first made me aware of St. Andrews' search for a writer-in-residence "back when," it seemed so far away from Oregon, where I knew the writers to be deep friends. But out I came, braced for a trembler. Immediately founding The St. Andrews Writers' Forum under the aegis of W.D. White and Robert F. Davidson, I cautiously chose two known quantities as readers at the first two public appearances. One was a top-notch poet from Finland and one an equally good poet from Michigan. Made confident by two seeming successes and having become instant and close friends with Sam Ragan--having found that we both felt at ease under the canopy of Ezra Pound--despite modest political differences in viewpoint--it was easy to decide that it was past time to start celebrating North Carolina's excellent writers.

I was still a touch nervous when Sam and Thad Stern and Heather Ross Miller arrived for a triple header on campus. I knew Sam and Thad were friends, but as Heather came too late for dinner I had no way to know if she knew them well or if they were on close terms. Sam read first. And all was comfy on the Southern front. I relaxed. Heather read next, a splendid reading, but that gal, as all splendid writers must, takes big risks. She ended with a tender verse about a fond youngster, a relative, who had died while still in public school. Thad read third. In the catbird seat, you know. He paced about and eyed the crowd and then stared at Heather and preceded his poems by saying in that Mark Twain twang of his, "Heather Ross Miller and I have a lot in common." There was another lengthy pause, and he added "in my family people tend to die, also."

After the audience recovered from being thunderstruck and I quickly checked the exits and calculated my moving costs back to the West Coast--Thad read, most eloquently. It was two weeks after the droll duo had scared me to death as a literary entrepreneur that I learned from Sam that they'd been friends since Heather was a pre-schooler.

My entrance exam.

And ever since then there's been laughter and tears, and the beloved personae--hard-working, generous and kind--have stacked up on the landing strip of memory like planes over Atlanta or O'Hare.

During the exciting time when Carolyn Kizer was one of the writers-in-residence at UNC-Chapel Hill I heard her say more than once that she felt that there were three major watershed areas in writing in America: New York, California, and North Carolina. That startled and delighted me and subsequently I have been around enough to be convinced that the analysis, albeit a generalization, was and is correct. That is not to denigrate any other place or strong ingrouping of writers, of which there are so many. Still, it is nice to contemplate, as a member of one of those three extended families.

Celebration is so important! It is all our task "to wake the living and revive the dead," as Sir Thomas North put it.

Certainly to discover and celebrate *new* talent is a part of the fabric, always, as is to celebrate after discovering *overlooked older* talent. We are all like cities, as William Carlos Williams pointed out, and so the many writer-cities ST. ANDREWS REVIEW and ST. ANDREWS PRESS has had a chance to present in print give me particular pleasure to contemplate as I participate in this warm ingathering with you, once again. Many are here tonight--Roy Flanagan all the way from Turkey and a dozen and more SAR writers from N.C. The third time I quote this publicly perhaps should be the last, but let me reiterate my true belief that regionalism at its worst is parochial and at its best is universal. And I am convinced that 90 percent of the writing in the various genres coming out of North Carolina at this time measures well by such a standard.

Writers within and without the academy have cause to pay public tribute to academic leaders such as Bun Perkinson and Bill Friday and Rubin Holden who have created welcoming atmospheres on their campuses, allowing the creative arts to flourish.

And the support of colleagues through thick and thin has moved me deeply in the writing community and on my home campus, St. Andrews. Nothing would be possible without this, so far as I am concerned.

The North Carolina Arts Council, one of the most forward-looking in the nation, deserves garlands and kudos for its far-sightedness, as we all know, also.

Hooray, and whoopee that these catalysts are part of the grand collusion that lets things happen in a state of love, without which nothing good lasts long.

So I am moved in my thanks to you fond friends here tonight and to the fifteen or so who are not but troubled to write cheery salutes--I am moved to paraphrase William Butler Yeats.

Think where man's glory first begins & ends
and say my glory is I have such friends.

